



## EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

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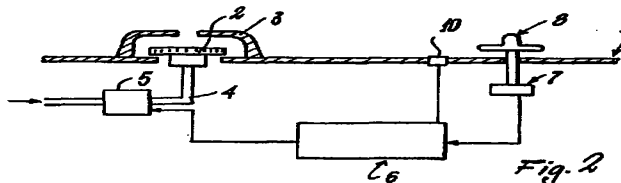
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(54) **System for indicating the residual heat of the pan support grids of domestic gas cooking appliances**

(57) A system for indicating by means of at least one warning light (10) the residual heat of at least one pan support grid (3) for a gas burner (2) in domestic cooking or heating appliances (1) controlled by an electronic control device (6), in which the residual heat of the grid (3) is measured indirectly by the electronic control device on the basis of data relative to the flame level set for the burner and the time for which said flame level is maintained, these data being corrected by a factor which takes account of the physical characteristics of the grid (3), such that the warning light (10) is and remains activated when the residual heat of the grid (3) exceeds a predetermined safety threshold (A) for its handling by the user.



## Description

[0001] This invention relates to a system for indicating to a user the residual heat of the pan support grids for gas burners of domestic cooking appliances, such as cookers, gas hobs and the like. The system of this invention is of the type defined in the introduction to the accompanying main claim.

[0002] Above the gas burners of domestic appliances it is known to generally position a usually metal element in the form of a grid, the purpose of which is to support the pan and maintain it in its correct position, in particular while it is being heated. The grid can be constructed such as to extend over all or part of the burners, or alternatively each individual burner can have its own grid. The grids are removable to enable the user to clean the hob on which the burners are situated. During the use of the cooking appliance the grid or grids attain very high temperatures, and after the gas has been turned off require a considerable time, which can vary from a few to several minutes, to cool to a temperature level such as not to cause burns if touched. This cooling time depends on various factors including the mass of the grid or grids and the maximum temperature attained by them.

[0003] From the foregoing considerations there is an apparent need for indicating to the user, for example visually, whether the grid or grids still have such a high residual temperature as to be able to cause burns if touched.

[0004] The residual grid temperature can be easily indicated by positioning a temperature sensor on the grid or in proximity thereto so as to measure its temperature, and connecting this sensor to a warning light which remains lit until the grid temperature attains a low level such as to be able to be handled without danger.

[0005] Solutions are known in the state of the art for measuring the residual temperature, in particular for glass ceramic hobs, either with electric heating elements or with gas burners positioned below the glass ceramic hob.

[0006] DE29619581 U1 relates to an invention which uses a solution analogous to the aforesaid applied to glass ceramic hobs, to measure the residual heat of the glass ceramic plate of a hob with external exposed gas burners.

[0007] Those solutions which use temperature sensors to measure the temperature of a hob or of the grids have however various drawbacks, including the difficulty of finding a position for the sensor such that it is not damaged, or in particular rendered inoperative, when the grid is removed and/or when the grid support surface is to be cleaned, and also the cost of a sensor which has to operate at high temperature.

[0008] The solution based on the use of sensors is hence inadequate.

[0009] An object of this invention is therefore to provide a system for indicating the residual heat of one or

more pan support grids without using temperature sensors and hence free of the drawbacks of those systems which use them.

[0010] This and further objects which will be more apparent from the detailed description given hereinafter are attained by a system for indicating the residual heat of a pan support grid for gas burners in accordance with the content of the accompanying claims.

[0011] The invention will be more apparent from the detailed description of a preferred embodiment thereof given hereinafter by way of non-limiting example with reference to the accompanying drawing, on which:

Figure 1 is a schematic plan view of a cooking hob with four gas burners each provided with its own removable grid;

Figure 2 is a schematic section through the hob, showing a burner, a warning light and a burner control knob;

Figure 3 shows two time diagrams, of which one, the upper one, relates to the estimated temperature of the grid of Figure 2, and the other relates to the flame level of the burner associated with said grid.

[0012] In the figures the reference numeral 1 indicates a cooking hob comprising four gas burners 2, with each of which there is associated its own pan support grid 3, for example of metal, for supporting pans containing substances to be cooked or heated.

[0013] Each burner 2 is connected to any known gas source via a pipe 4 into which a solenoid valve 5 is connected to regulate the gas flow to the burner on the basis of signals reaching it from an electronic control device 6 (comprising a microprocessor), connected to a control member, for example a potentiometer of circular type or the like 7 operated by rotating a knob 8 to which it is operationally connected. On rotating the knob, the user varies (starting from zero, ie the burner inactivated) the voltage which the potentiometer 7 applies to the electronic control device 6, the output of which varies the operating conditions of the valve 5 and hence the gas flow to the burner 2. In other words, for each angular position, other than zero, which the user causes the knob 8 to assume, there corresponds a given gas throughput reaching the burner 2 via the valve 5, to which there corresponds a given flame level. The presence or absence of the flame is known to the device 6 by means of a traditional flame detector (not shown). In this manner the electronic control device knows exactly the flame levels set at the burner and is able to calculate the amount of time for which these levels have been maintained.

[0014] With these two items of data and adding a correction factor (to be determined experimentally and to be stored as data in the memory) which takes account of the physical characteristics of the particular pan support grid (material, mass, shape), the microprocessor incorporated into the electronic control device 6 is able

to estimate what the residual temperature of the grid 3 will be even after the flame has been extinguished, and by means of a warning light 10, provided for example on the hob 1 and relative to the specific burner, provides the user with information concerning the grid temperature and hence its danger. If the warning light, for example a lamp, is active, the grid must not be touched without due caution by the user, who can however freely handle the grid when the warning light is extinguished.

[0015] The lower diagram of Figure 3 shows by way of example the variation of the flame level with time, for which the upper diagram shows the variation of the estimated grid temperature. When the estimated grid temperature exceeds a predetermined safety value, indicated by A, the warning light is lit, and is extinguished if equal to or less than that value. Alternatively, the warning light can comprise a plurality of operating thresholds indicating the danger level of the grid temperature (these thresholds are indicated by B, C, D in Figure 3, by way of example). For example, a continuously active light indicates a very high grid temperature, an intermittently active light indicates intermediate temperatures, and an inactive light indicates a temperature which is not dangerous for the user. The number of thresholds providing intermittent light activation can be representative of the sensitivity of the user. For example, the intermittence can vary between a high frequency and a low frequency, so representing various grid temperatures. The user can then determine, on the basis of his own sensitivity, whether he can handle the grid at these temperatures (represented by the various activation frequencies).

[0016] The described embodiment has been provided by way of example, and is susceptible to numerous modifications.

[0017] Instead of the described rotary potentiometer, the following can be used as the selection device for the burner flame power: an encoder, a keypad by which different signals can be applied to the electronic control device via a key or a combination of keys operating on matrices for example of diode type, a sliding potentiometer, etc.

[0018] In addition, the warning light 10 can be a light emitting diode or a display in the form of light emitting segments. The solenoid valve 5 can be of modulating type. The electronic control device can have as many inputs as the number of burners, in order to be able to distinguish them and hence distinguish the relative grids.

[0019] In the case of a single grid common to all the burners, a single warning light is sufficient.

[0020] An embodiment of the invention has been described applied to a glass ceramic hob with external gas heating elements. However the invention can also be applied to hobs with heating elements positioned below the hob plate.

#### Claims

1. A system for indicating by means of at least one warning light (10) the residual heat of at least one pan support grid (3) for a gas burner (2) in domestic cooking or heating appliances (1) controlled by an electronic control device (6), wherein the residual heat of the grid (3) is measured indirectly by the electronic control device (6) on the basis of data relative to the flame level set for the burner (2) and the time for which said flame level is maintained, these data being corrected by a factor which takes account of the physical characteristics of the grid (3), such that the warning light (10) is and remains activated when the residual heat of the grid (3) exceeds a predetermined safety threshold (A) for its handling by the user.
2. A system as claimed in claim 1, characterised by comprising various activation thresholds for the warning light (10).
3. A system as claimed in claim 2, characterised in that the warning light operates intermittently with an intermittence depending on the temperature threshold attained by the heat of the grid.

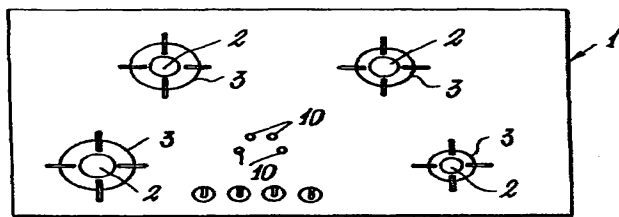


Fig. 1

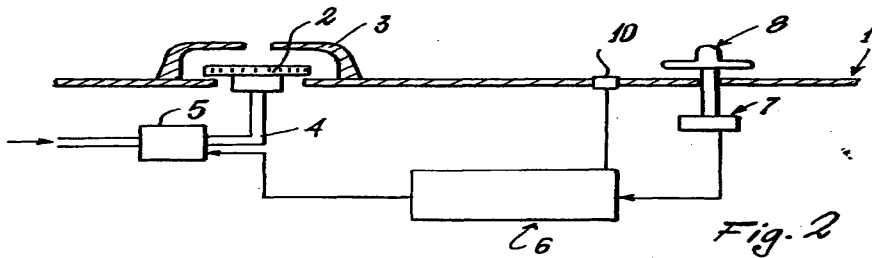


Fig. 2

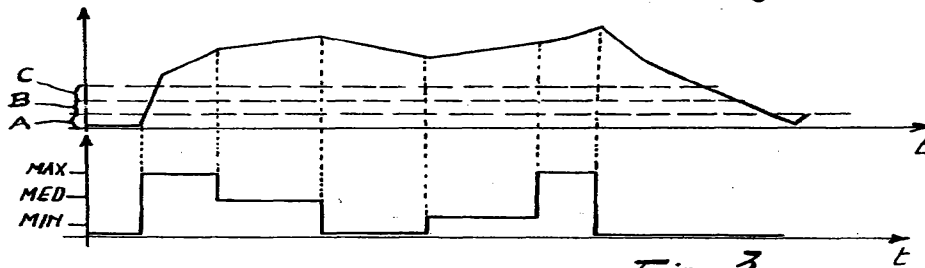


Fig. 3



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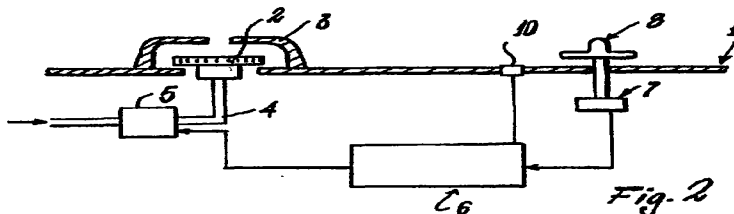
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European Patent  
Office

# EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number  
EP 98 12 2030

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (IntCl.6)
A	US 3 186 472 A (CARAVELLA) 1 June 1965 (1965-06-01) * column 1, line 16 - line 36; claim 1; figures *	1	F24C3/12
D,A	DE 296 19 581 U (SCHOTT GLASWERKE) 13 March 1997 (1997-03-13) * claim 1; figures * -----	1	
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (IntCl.6)
			F24C
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 12 April 2000	Examiner Vanheusden, J
<p><b>CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS</b></p> <p>X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document</p> <p>T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons ..... &amp; : member of the same patent family, corresponding document</p>			

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**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT  
ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.**

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This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report.  
The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on  
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12-04-2000

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
US 3186472 A	01-06-1965	NONE	
DE 29619581 U	13-03-1997	NONE	

EPO FORM P009

For more details about this annex : see Official Journal of the European Patent Office, No. 12/82